

VZCZCXR06104

PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLH RUEHLD RUEHLZ

RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHVK RUEHYG

DE RUEHAB #0270 0560819

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

P 250819Z FEB 08

FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0331

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE

RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3426

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1244

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1111

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1680

RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2258

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000270

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL SOCI KPAO TX

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: NEWSPAPER FEATURES ARTICLE ON  
INDEPENDENT KOSOVO

REF: A. ASHGABAT 0212

1B. STATE 13716

11. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (SBU) On February 23, "Zaman," a Turkmen-language newspaper, featured a half-page, above-the-fold article with color photos, entitled "Kosovo - New Independent State." "Zaman" borrows some of its content from its "Zaman" parent company in Turkey, but is closely controlled by Turkmenistan's Central Publishing Bureau.

13. (SBU) The article begins: "There is a new state among the world's independent states. Last Sunday, Kosovo announced its independence. Despite Serbia's objection, a number of states have recognized Kosovo's independence." The article contains a summary section that lists basic information, including the capital, state language, president's name, independence day, currency, and population. Subsequent paragraphs go into greater detail regarding the territory and population of the country, history (with a special emphasis on the historic period under the Ottoman Empire), state language, the relationship with Turkey, independence, and the first new laws.

14. (SBU) The article lists the many countries that have recognized Kosovo and notes the United States was first, followed by Albania. It also lists the countries that do not recognize Kosovo's independence. It adds that for these countries Kosovo will remain an autonomous republic within Serbia.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: The content "Zaman" used from the parent company in the past has been limited to neutral information about conferences or geographic tidbits and not hard, international news. The decision to run this story appears to be an effort to push the envelope a bit on what can be covered internationally. This is particularly noteworthy given the controversial nature of the subject. Turkmenistan, an officially neutral country, tries to walk a fine line

between Russia and the West. Given the multiple recent demarches we have delivered on the topic (and probably correspondingly opposite ones from Russia) and the years of controversy surrounding Kosovo, this article is an important step certainly approved by the government. Although this article does not constitute an official recognition of Kosovo's independence, it is likely the closest thing we will get from Turkmenistan for the foreseeable future. END

COMMENT.  
HOAGLAND